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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 09 TOKYO 000349

SIPDIS

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WHITE HOUSE/NSC/NEC; JUSTICE FOR STU CHEMTOB IN ANTI-TRUST DIVISION;
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SUBJECT: DAILY SUMMARY OF JAPANESE PRESS 02/13/09

INDEX:

- (1) Poll on Aso cabinet, political parties (Tokyo Shimbun)
- (2) What decision will Aso make on six options for midterm target to cut greenhouse gas emissions? (Asahi)
- (3) Editorial: U.S. economic stimulus package leaves concern about protectionism (Tokyo Shimbun)
- (4) Reason for Nye not easily accepting post of ambassador to Japan (Shukan Bunshun)
- (5) Ginowan mayor calls for Futenma helo transfer within 2010 (Ryukyu Shimpo)
- (6) Military drill: Ready for Afghan deployment? (Playboy)

There will be no Daily Summary on February 16 - an American holiday.

ARTICLES:

- (1) Poll on Aso cabinet, political parties

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 2) (Full)
February 10, 2009

Questions & Answers

(Figures shown in percentage. Parentheses denote the results of the last survey conducted Jan. 10-11.)

Q: Do you support the Aso cabinet?

Yes 18.1 (19.2)

No 70.9 (70.2)

Don't know (D/K) + no answer (N/A) 11.0 (10.6)

Q: (Only for those who answered "yes" to the previous question)
What's the primary reason for your approval of the Aso cabinet? Pick only one from among those listed below.

The prime minister is trustworthy 13.9 (13.6)

Because it's a coalition cabinet of the Liberal Democratic Party and the New Komeito 7.1 (12.6)

The prime minister has leadership ability 1.9 (2.7)

Something can be expected of its economic policies 8.4 (10.1)

Something can be expected of its foreign policies 4.7 (3.7)

Something can be expected of its political reforms 1.4 (3.3)

Something can be expected of its tax reforms 1.9 (3.6)

Something can be expected of its administrative reforms 4.2 (---)

There's no other appropriate person (for prime minister) 51.4 (45.8)

Other answers (O/A) 2.6 (3.0)

D/K+N/A 2.5 (1.6)

Q: (Only for those who answered "no" to the first question) What's the primary reason for your disapproval of the Aso cabinet? Pick only one from among those listed below.

The prime minister is untrustworthy 16.5 (18.2)

Because it's a coalition cabinet of the Liberal Democratic Party and

TOKYO 00000349 002 OF 009

the New Komeito 4.2 (4.7)

The prime minister lacks leadership ability 25.8 (22.6)

Nothing can be expected of its economic policies 28.3 (28.8)

Nothing can be expected of its foreign policies 1.0 (0.9)

Nothing can be expected of its political reforms 7.8 (8.6)

Nothing can be expected of its tax reforms 1.8 (2.4)

Nothing can be expected of its administrative reforms 6.0 (6.5)

Don't like the prime minister's personal character 6.4 (5.6)

O/A 0.5 (0.5)

D/K+N/A 1.7 (1.2)

Q: The government plans to hand out cash benefits to individual households as an economic stimulus measure. How will you spend the money? Pick only one.

Use the money for living 49.6

Use the money for pleasures or expensive items 20.6

Save the money 20.5

Won't receive the money 5.2

O/A 0.9

D/K+N/A 3.2

Q: Prime Minister Taro Aso has clarified a plan to legislate necessary measures by the end of fiscal 2011 to raise the consumption tax rate after seeing the economic situation. Do you appreciate this plan?

Yes 26.5

No 68.5

D/K+N/A 5.0

Q: Do you look forward to Prime Minister Aso's economic policy measures for an economic turnaround?

Yes 19.4

No 77.0

D/K+N/A 3.6

Q: What do you think the government should prioritize among the following economic measures? Pick only one.

Public spending on public works projects, etc. 11.4

Tax break 15.1

Job security 48.0

Regulatory reform, deregulation 5.2
Priority investment in prospective industries 12.5
O/A 1.9
D/K+N/A 5.9

Q: Postal services have now been separated into four different companies for mail collection and delivery, over-the-counter services, postal savings, and postal insurance business in accordance with postal privatization decided when the Koizumi cabinet was in office. Prime Minister Aso has clarified his intention to review their four-way business management. Do you appreciate it?

Yes 34.7
No 52.1
D/K+N/A 13.2

Q: The House of Representatives' current term is up until September

TOKYO 00000349 003 OF 009

this year. When would you like the House of Representatives to be dissolved for a general election?

Right away 26.3 (33.7)
Around April after the budget for fiscal 2009 is approved in the Diet 36.0 (32.7)
Around June when the ordinary Diet session ends 14.2 (12.5)
Wait until the current term expires in September without dissolving the Diet 16.3 (15.1)
D/K+N/A 7.2 (6.0)

Q: Would you like the present LDP-led coalition government to continue, or would you otherwise like it to be replaced with a DPJ-led coalition government?

LDP-led coalition government 25.9 (30.5)
DPJ-led coalition government 55.3 (51.4)
D/K+N/A 18.8 (18.1)

Q: Which political party are you going to vote for in the next House of Representatives election in your proportional representation bloc?

Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) 23.0 (26.3)
Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ or Minshuto) 42.9 (39.7)
New Komeito (NK) 3.4 (3.1)
Japanese Communist Party (JCP) 5.0 (5.9)
Social Democratic Party (SDP or Shaminto) 0.9 (3.1)
People's New Party (PNP or Kokumin Shinto) 0.6 (1.0)
Reform Club (RC or Kaikaku Kurabu) --- (0.1)
New Party Nippon (NPN or Shinto Nippon) 0.6 (0.2)
Other political parties, groups --- (---)
D/K+N/A 23.6 (20.6)

Q: When comparing Prime Minister Taro Aso and DPJ President Ichiro Ozawa, which one do you think is more appropriate for prime minister?

Taro Aso 23.2 (22.1)
Ichiro Ozawa 43.8 (46.4)
D/K+N/A 33.0 (31.5)

Q: Which political party do you support?

Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) 23.7 (27.5)
Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ or Minshuto) 31.5 (31.1)
New Komeito (NK) 3.0 (2.2)
Japanese Communist Party (JCP) 5.7 (3.6)
Social Democratic Party (SDP or Shaminto) 1.1 (2.4)
People's New Party (PNP or Kokumin Shinto) 0.4 (0.4)
Reform Club (RC or Kaikaku Kurabu) --- (---)
New Party Nippon (NPN or Shinto Nippon) 0.4 (0.2)
Other political parties, groups --- (---)
None 33.3 (30.8)
D/K+N/A 0.9 (1.8)

Polling methodology: The survey was conducted Feb. 7-8 across the nation by Kyodo News Service on a computer-aided random digit dialing (RDD) basis. Among randomly generated telephone numbers, those actually for household use with one or more eligible voters totaled 1,477. Answers were obtained from 1,022 persons.

TOKYO 00000349 004 OF 009

(2) What decision will Aso make on six options for midterm target to cut greenhouse gas emissions?

ASAHI (Page 5) (Full)
February 13, 2009

A government panel on global warming, chaired by Toyota Motor Corp. Advisor Hiroshi Okuda, yesterday released six options it selected for a 2020 midterm target to reduce the nation's greenhouse gas emissions by 2020. The six proposals span a wide range, from a cut of 25 PERCENT to an increase of 7 PERCENT from 1990 levels. Prime Minister Aso intends to select one of the six options by June.

Difficult to pursue economic growth and environmental protection simultaneously

Of the six options, plans for an increase of 6 PERCENT and a cut of 4 PERCENT are based on the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry's (METI) outlook for long-term energy supply and demand. The 4 PERCENT reduction plan to be attained by maximizing the use of state-of-the-art technology was included in a package of measures to stem global warming released last June by former Prime Minister Fukuda.

The remaining four options - a target between a 2 PERCENT cut and a 7 PERCENT increase, a 1-12 PERCENT cut, a 16-17 PERCENT cut, and a 25 PERCENT reduction - are all based on numerical figures discussed in negotiations ahead of the 15th session of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP15) in December, in which a post-Kyoto mechanism beyond 2012 will be adopted.

Out of the four options, the 1-12 PERCENT and 16-17 PERCENT cut plans are regarded as very likely. These two options are based on the premise that Japan will slash its emissions by 25 PERCENT, the lowest level under a scenario being discussed in international negotiations that mandates industrialized countries to cut emissions 25-40 PERCENT, and that the cost needed to reduce emissions will be shared equally among the industrialized countries. Under the 1-12 PERCENT reduction option by spending the same amount of money to cut each ton of emissions, the European Union (EU) and the U.S. would be required to cut emissions by 17-28 PERCENT, but since Japan has attained the highest level of energy efficiency in the world, its reduction percentage would be lower.

The variation in the targets reflects a wide disparity between such eco-conscious advocates as the Environment Ministry, which gives priority to efforts for containing global warming, and those placing emphasis on economic growth, like METI, which wants to minimize the adverse effect of emissions cuts on the economy. If Japan comes up with an ambitious target, the domestic economy will inevitably be affected negatively, while a lower target will inevitably incur international criticism.

A government source said: "It is difficult to attain economic growth and international contributions simultaneously. There will be no option but a political decision." Prime Minister Aso is expected to make a decision in the end.

Eagerness, leadership being questioned

In a meeting of the expert panel on global warming held yesterday,

TOKYO 00000349 005 OF 009

Prime Minister Aso emphasized: "It is important to set a goal that is feasible and acceptable for the people. I have no intention to

present a scientifically groundless one. I want to set a feasible target."

Aso, who is exploring an appropriate timing for dissolving the House of Representatives, needs to raise public support for his cabinet, which has fallen below 20 PERCENT . Given this he has given priority to economic stimulus measures over protecting the environment. A cabinet minister said: "The prime minister probably cannot afford to tackle global warming."

Many observers see Aso, who used to be a businessman, has worked out environment measures while giving consideration to their impact on business. A government official said: "His views tend to favor companies. He is not as eager as former Prime Minister Fukuda (toward the global warming issue)."

The gap between METI and the Environment Ministry has yet to be bridged. On the Japanese version of Green New Deal, as well, the Environment Ministry disclosed the plan, while METI was coordinating views with various government agencies as told by Aso.

International negotiations on measures to combat global warming, in which the complicated interests of countries are involved, are a "complicated, multinational equation," said a government source. Questions are being raised about whether the prime minister, who has lost his grip on power, would be able to demonstrate his leadership.

(3) Editorial: U.S. economic stimulus package leaves concern about protectionism

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 5) (Full)
February 12, 2009

The two pillars that will prop up the U.S. economy have been shaped. The economic stimulus bill has cleared the Senate. The government has released a financial stabilization package. This is a step forward. However, the Buy American clause, which mandates the procurement of U.S.-made goods for public works should be revised.

The current economic recession is so serious that President Obama in his first press conference after being sworn in called on Congress to pass the bill, noting, "This crisis is no ordinary economic recession. It is the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression."

The Senate approved the 838-billion-dollar (approximately 76 trillion yen) economic stimulus bill, after amending some portions of the bill adopted by the House of Representatives. As such, the work to integrate proposals made by both the House of Representatives and the Senate has started at the Joint Conference.

Delay in the implementation of measures will have an adverse effect not only on the U.S. but also on the world economy. We hope both the House of Representatives and the Senate will undergo coordination so that the bill will be promptly passed into law with the president's signature.

The stimulus bill and the government's financial stabilization package will not function without either of the two. That is not

TOKYO 00000349 006 OF 009

only because the economy has cooled off but also because financial institutions are moribund, strapped with a huge amount of non-performing loans. It is necessary for the government to write off bad loans, while stimulating investment and consumption through tax cuts and fiscal spending.

In that regard, the financial stabilization package is somewhat insubstantial. It includes a framework for the government and the private sector to jointly purchase up to 1 trillion dollars (roughly 90 trillion yen) of non-performing loans. However, details regarding how to purchase such loans have been left up to future consideration.

On negatve reaction to ambiguity, the U.S. stock market was inundated

with sell orders, depressing stock prices. We want to see the U.S. government boil down the package, including the total amount of bad loans to be purchased.

The Senate has cut expenditures for repairing school buildings and subsidies to various states incorporated in the bill adopted by the House of Representatives, while expanding an income tax cut and a tax cut for home buyers in response to demand by the Republican Party. As a result, the ratio of tax cuts to fiscal spending in the package has come to 3:2.

The Democratic Party is attaching importance to increasing spending, but the Republican Party is giving priority to tax breaks. This balance between tax cuts and increased spending could be of some help when considering Japan's economic policy.

What we cannot overlook is that the Buy American clause has been left intact in the Senate proposal as well. The Senate has modified the House of Representatives' proposal, adopting the words that the clause would be applied in the form of respecting international agreements. Even so, China, India, Brazil and Russia will be treated in a disadvantageous manner.

Protectionism, under which preferential treatment is given to domestic products, could bring about a chain of retaliatory measures, once it is adopted. This is the phase where President Obama's leadership will be brought into question. Participants in the meeting of finance ministers and central bank governors from the Group of Seven nations (G-7) to be held shortly should articulate their opposition.

(4) Reason for Nye not easily accepting post of ambassador to Japan

SHUKAN BUNSHUN (Page 51) (Full)
February 19, 2009

The Asahi Shimbun reported on Feb. 8 that "the United States has decided" informally to appoint Harvard University Prof. Joseph Nye as ambassador to Japan. However, the White House has yet to announce anything about it, even though one month has passed.

"If the White House has really internally decided, it would have been formally announced in a few days," said Western informed source. Therefore, there must have been some kind of unusual change.

The informed source continued:

TOKYO 00000349 007 OF 009

"It's safe to say that President Barack Obama singled Nye out for the ambassadorial post in Japan. But Nye is hesitating to accept the offer because Nye's first choice is to be ambassador to India."

Nye has a strong interest in the nuclear proliferation issue.

The informed source remarked:

"Since Iran has nuclear-weapons development program, there is concern that Arab countries, too, will want to possess nuclear weapons. But the countries over which tensions are highest are India and Pakistan, both of which possess nuclear weapons. Al-Qaeda and the Taliban have concentrated their activities in Afghanistan and Pakistan. It is said that one of Al-Qaeda's targets is Pakistan's nuclear weapons. India suspects that Pakistan's secret police were involved in last year's terrorist attack in Mumbai, so it might retaliate against Pakistan. The region is in a dangerous situation, and Nye wants to demonstrate his capabilities in India."

A Japanese foreign policy specialist said:

"He probably thinks that the post of ambassador to Japan would be uninteresting. That is because Japan does nothing in terms of diplomacy. Although Japan puts policy pressure on America, arguing that the issue of North Korea's abductions of Japanese citizens is more important than the nuclear issue, it has never come up with its

own policy or strategy to resolve that issue. Japan simply entrusted the abduction issue to (former) Assistant Secretary of State Christopher Hill."

The informed source said: "According to one of Nye's acquaintances, he is finding it hard to give up his position at Harvard University. He is agonizing over which to choose: Tokyo, Delhi, or Boston."

Reportedly the ambassadorial appointments are usually decided in June.

A diplomatic journalist said:

"The appointments of Mondale and Foley were decided in July. It was exceptional that Ambassador Schieffer was appointed (on Jan. 21) a day after the presidential inauguration. This was because Schieffer was a partner with President Bush as owners of a Major League baseball club."

If Nye becomes the U.S. ambassador to Japan, he will be an "academic ambassador" following Ambassador Reischauer. Which city will Nye choose?

(5) Ginowan mayor calls for Futenma helo transfer within 2010

RYUKYU SHIMPO (Page 2) (Full)
February 13, 2009

GINOWAN-Okinawa Prefecture's Ginowan Mayor Yoichi Iha, meeting the press yesterday, announced a third action program for the return of Futenma airfield. Iha stated, "We will ask the Japanese and U.S. governments to relocate the Futenma-based helicopters to Guam within 2010." With this, the mayor indicated his intention to remove the danger of Futenma airfield with those choppers being relocated early for the airfield's de facto closure. The mayor also clarified a plan to visit the United States in July to ask the Obama administration

TOKYO 00000349 008 OF 009

for a solution to the Futenma issue.

When Foreign Minister Nakasone visited Okinawa Prefecture on Feb. 1, Iha asked Nakasone for the first time to relocate the Futenma-based heliborne troops. Iha stated: "The United States has earmarked the cost of Guam relocation in its budget for fiscal 2009, and it's clear that most of the Marines at Futenma will be moved down to Guam. I will work on the Japanese and U.S. governments to have Futenma airfield closed down and returned earlier." Ginowan City will earmark about 5.8 million yen in its budget for the new fiscal year for the mayor's visit to the United States.

The third action program follows the first and second ones that aimed for the return of Futenma airfield by 2008. The action program this time notes that Futenma airfield has been violating safety standards and has defects in its establishment per se as recognized in a court ruling on a lawsuit instituted by local residents against the roar of Futenma-based aircraft. It also incorporate plans to file a complaint with an international organization or judicature from the perspective of human rights.

(6) Military drill: Ready for Afghan deployment?

PLAYBOY (Full)
February 23, 2009 issue

Light snow was falling over the Ground Self-Defense Force's Oyanohara range at the foot of Mt. Aso, where the U.S. Army and the GSDF were conducting joint training exercises, codenamed "Orient Shield 2009." The drill had the participation of about 300 troops from the U.S. Army's 256th Infantry Brigade in Louisiana and about 700 troops from the 42nd Infantry Regiment under the GSDF's 8th Division in Kumamoto.

About 60 PERCENT of the American soldiers had already experienced deployment to Iraq or Afghanistan. How did the GSDF look like in the eyes of those tough guys?

"The purpose of our training exercises here this time is to learn from each other's knowledge of tactics and weapons and to familiarize ourselves with the differences," said Lt. Col. William Rachal, who commanded the American soldiers in the training exercises. "If we do so," Lt. Col. Rachal went on, "we would be on the same mission someday." The lieutenant colonel was surprised to see the "orderliness" and "high skills" of those GSDF members, he said.

Lt. Col. Rachal talked about "the same mission." Does this mean the joint training exercises were conducted with Afghan deployment in mind? "That's for the United States government and the Japanese government to decide," he said, "and that's a political issue." He added, "We're in the military, so we just follow orders."

At any rate, there were tanks, antitank firearms, and trench mortars. Using those weapons, their joint military training drills were wide-ranging from urban combats to emergency medical support. Such drills were undoubtedly for actual warfare. The Japanese and American soldiers were also in man-to-man sniper training, which is an indispensable skill in Afghanistan, which has many valleys.

As a matter of fact, the Obama administration, which is focusing on Afghanistan, is highly likely to request Japan in the near future to

TOKYO 00000349 009 OF 009

send out its troops to Afghanistan. Forewarned is forearmed... What the GSDF acquired from this military drill should not be small at all.

ZUMWALT